Seattle Light Rail Review Panel
Meeting Notes for December 2, 2003

Agenda Items

- North Link SEIS Overview
- South 154th Street Station
- North Link SEIS Review and Coordination

Panel Members Present

- Jack Mackie, Chair
- Jay Lazerwitz
- Mimi Sheridan
- George Blomberg

Staff Present

- Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
- James Irish, Sound Transit
- Tracy Reed, Sound Transit
- Kathy Dockins, CityDesign
- Lisa Rutzick, CityDesign
- Marty Curry, Planning Commission
- Barb Wilson, Planning Commission
- Calvin Chow, SDoT

LRRP Business

Approval of meeting minutes was tabled due to the lack of a quorum. There was no staff report, and the meeting began with introductions all around.

North Link SEIS Overview

James Irish, Sound Transit
Tracy Reed, Sound Transit

Background and Proposal:
The Panel has received Executive Summaries of the North Link SEIS. Barb Wilson has other documents that Panelists may want to see. A quick reference fact sheet is also available that outlines the schedule and refers readers to the actual SEIS.

James and Tracy distributed a status report handout for the SEIS. The information follows:

Draft SEIS Schedule
A postcard was sent out to 80,000 to 90,000 households along the alignment in mid-November. The draft SEIS was published November 21 and is currently available. The comment period has begun, and was extended to 70 days because of the holiday season. It ends January 30; open houses will be held January 7 (Union Station) and 8 (UW Kane Hall).

North Link Background
The Sound Transit Board adopted the initial segment and approved the North Link study in fall 2001, which led to the design review element. In fall 2002 the board narrowed routes for the draft SEIS. The board requested additional West Tunnel geo-technical work (Ship Canal crossing), peer review, and third party discussions (WSDoT, UW, KCM) in March 2003. As stated previously, the draft SEIS was published in November 2003.

North Link Characteristics

The corridor is densely developed, with major employment centers and high transit ridership markets. The difficult topography requires grade separation of the right-of-way. The cost is high, but the cost-effectiveness is as well because of the greater potential for riders. 30 years of study have gone into this particular corridor.

North Link Study Purpose

Sound Transit needs to reconsider routes between downtown Seattle and Northgate, particularly as they relate to Portage Bay; the Northgate segment was not funded in Sound Move. The goals and guiding principles of the study are to reduce construction cost; reduce construction risk, and seek a cost-effective solution that maximizes ridership.

North Link Work Program

James and Tracy chose to skip this part for now.

Inter-Agency Work Team

The work that led the team to this point included monthly meetings to review Sound Transit's technical work and provide project advice and coordination. The team was comprised of staff representatives of the City of Seattle, King County, WSDoT, UW, the FTA, and Sound Transit.

North Link SEIS Route Alternatives

The corridor is seven to eight miles long, with seven route combinations between UW and downtown Seattle and two between UW and Northgate. The decision is focused in three pieces.

South Lake Union/Capitol Hill has three route alternatives:

1st Hill: a mined station under Madison at Virginia Mason; this was the preferred alternative in 1999.

Capitol Hill: cut & cover with Nagle and Broadway station options traveling to Broadway & John OR a direct route skipping First Hill with the same station options. The advantage to skipping First Hill is that it's a shorter route so there's no need for a crossover track.

Eastlake: the alignment would continue from Convention Place Station under Eastlake to Harrison/Republican. A CPS station could be added using cut & cover to Harrison. Either would require changing the bus station: either the train platform would be under the bus platform or there would be no transit stop. Harrison would require a pedestrian bridge over I-5.

While most of the impacts of the alignment in general are related to construction, the SLU/CH alternative has the following specific construction impacts:

Eastlake: cut & cover from CPS to Harrison would cause traffic and road closure impacts. There are also slope stability issues along I-5 and the CPS bus facility would need to be reconstructed (although the transit tunnel would remain open.

Capitol Hill: the Broadway station would have a greater impact on businesses and traffic. The Nagle station would affect the reservoir and park, and would lead to more displacements.

First Hill: this alignment would have the same impacts as the Capitol Hill alignment, plus it would be a mined station and would require a Capitol Hill crossover.

Long-term impacts of the SLU/Capitol Hill alignment include:

Displacement of business and residential uses by the stations (but support redevelopment in station areas). The Eastlake Avenue route has the greatest long-term impact in that the Harrison Station pedestrian bridge

alters views.

The Ship Canal to the U District also has three route alternatives:

15th Ave/Portage Bay: a mined tunnel emerging at Pacific & 15th (the original preferred alternative).

Montlake: a cut & cover tunnel crossing the center of UW, also crossing the water under the bridge instead of under Portage Bay. The cut & cover cross-over could meet the cut & cover near the Burke Museum or cross over to 45th with a cut & cover station near Brooklyn or 45th. Two vent shafts are associated with Montlake: two sites near Boyer Ave E & 19th Ave E, and Montlake Place & 22nd Ave E (Hop-In Market).

West Tunnel routes: cut & cover, with or without SW campus/Brooklyn stations. With the stations, the Portage Bay crossing would need to be further west. Without them, there would be only one station in the U District. There is one vent shaft associated with West Tunnel & Portage Bay: SR-520 at 10th Ave E.

The Ship Canal/U District alternative has the following specific long-term impacts:

All routes support long-term UW growth

Brooklyn station best supports business district redevelopment (the only station not on campus)

Montlake vent options will displace residences, church parking, or a business

All have some measure of vibration and electro-magnetic frequency impacts; mitigation will be needed to meet UW requested thresholds for all alternatives. UW wants to protect existing and future research needs; UW and ST are in close coordination to reach a solution.

Northgate routes and impacts include:

12th Avenue: the farthest east, it's a bored tunnel and emerges northbound north of the ramps. The station would be at N 56th between Roosevelt and 12th. As a cut & cover, it has the most impacts, displacing several residences and businesses.

8th Avenue: an east portal would be south of Ravenna; there could also be a west portal. Either would rise to an elevated structure/station above 65th under the Lake City Way ramps (cut into the hillside, under the bridges and onramps). Tunnel staging at the west portal will displace several residences and if use of the U-Heights south parking lot is required, would displace the farmer's market. Tunnel staging at the east portal displaces more residences but does not impact U-Heights center. All routes will displace several residential and business uses long-term. An 8th Avenue guideway will displace additional residences from NE 65th to NE 70th. All support redevelopment at Northgate & Roosevelt station areas. Both 8th Avenue elevated routes cross historic Olmsted parkway Ravenna Boulevard.

Both route possibilities include stations at Roosevelt and Northgate; Northgate would be elevated. The main differentiation between the two is the integration of Park & Ride lots. The elevated station will require columns and the removal of trees. The route from LCW to Northgate is the same for all alternatives.

<u>Encouraging North Link Results</u>

Most route alternatives will reduce construction costs, reduce construction risk, and retain high ridership. The routes are cost-effective, North Link is highly competitive for federal funding, and other benefits include:

improved service hours and frequency

improved service speed and reliability

significant savings of travel time
efficient integration of bus/rail service will create bus hour time savings
unused land at stations available for redevelopment after construction
potential for future growth because of large people-carrying capacity

The handout included several graphs outlining the benefits of North Link, particularly with relationship to cost-effectiveness and ridership.

Discussion:

- Displacement at 8th Avenue . . . won't there be some from the tunnel, too? *Most of the displacement occurs in Roosevelt (about 20 to 25 single-family homes). There is some displacement in both; Roosevelt is represented in the EIS as it is the highest number. The number in the executive summary is correct. The gas station at 65th & 8th represents a business displacement although there's no current opportunity there.*
- How will cut & cover disrupt service activity? *The excavation will be done off of the street. Nagle is underneath private property. There will be decking to enable cross traffic; we need that to maintain access to the churches. There will be no closure of 45th. There will also be decking to maintain access to UW facilities (at Brooklyn).*
- What about business activity? *We've discussed that qualitatively, not quantitatively. It's too speculative. There will be few <u>permanent</u> parking impacts; most are due to construction.*
- Thanks for the presentation! This will get us started. What about planning/coordination with the 520 project? Are you coordinating with WSDoT on the interchange? *The interagency group was a forum to discuss that. Initially we thought about having Link on top of 520, but chose not to study that further.*
- What if the track continued along 520 in the future? *If that happens, it would be along I-90, not 520. I-90 is a better corridor for high-capacity transit. They might be able to add a bus or HOV lane to 520 but not a train. It would be unfavorable to pedestrians. One WSDoT alternative was to have it go under the Arboretum; there might be more opportunities closer to the station.*
- Where's the best location to catch the train? The hospital should be a big ridership generator. How will east side riders get to the hospital? The Green Line won't accommodate that. *Ridership plummets if we go by the hospital*. What about the Medical Center? Would the First Hill station be primarily for the Medical Center or Seattle U? *Both.* Yes, but which has more ridership? *They're about equal. We used zones to study that, but we don't know the exact number of each.*
- You've got ridership, construction cost, and annualized cost . . . how do they relate to each other? Does the annualized cost integrate both? *Yes.* On page 16, does anything seem provocative to you? *Yes, the range between alternatives seems fairly narrow. Compared to other systems across the country, it rates well because of its high ridership. But it is a narrow ridership. The two with the highest ridership aren't necessarily the most cost-effective.*
- *This isn't represented, but where it says "West Tunnel" that's actually the West Tunnel with the SW Campus station. The savings from cutting that second station don't compensate for the loss of ridership – it's the same with CPS. At First Hill the change is worth it.*
- It's easy to focus on the differences, but how significant are they? Maybe X amount of variation shouldn't be the basis for a decision. *It will make a difference as a comparative tool, but nationally the range is narrow.*
- It seems like some are getting a bad bounce because of the difference in the number of stations. What's the max number of stations there can be and still be cost-effective? The Green Line brings cost-effectiveness into the $5 range. Calvin will find the answer.

South 154th Street Station

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit

Background and Proposal:

Debora presented a site plan for the at-grade section of MLK for reference. The red line indicated where the alignment is elevated and the blue line indicated where it is cut into the hill. Under the 144th street bridge (over I-5 at the bottom of Bremer's Hill), the track will be on the freeway side of the hill, not the neighborhood side of the hill. Package A covers the guideway and elevated section. Most of the elevated guideway is in Tukwila; segmented guideway construction will be used, where pieces are created off-site then put in place and post-tensioned. Debora showed photos of the column construction, then distributed a handout of the south corridor plans and walked the Panel through its individual elements.

The guideway columns are pretty standard throughout: single columns about 6' to 6' 3" wide. ST wants to keep the guideway simple without adding bulk or height to the structure. Drainage is being tucked into side recesses. At the substation near East Marginal, conduits will lead to the guideway. The I-5 crossing is a wide span, so will be supported by double columns (less mass than one big column). There will be a kick plate for water dispersion to break up rainfall more than regular drainage – we won't need to irrigate under the guideway as native plants will be watered by the kick plate. *Jack notes that ST gets points for that!!*

At MLK the guideway will be located either on top of the straddle vents or within the straddle vent, depending on (and reflecting) the curve of the column. Just before the Boeing access road ST will be planting trees throughout the industrial area to match the MLK vegetation plan. ST is still working with Tukwila on plant maintenance. As the alignment moves out of MLK, it travels slightly uphill so it has to climb to the transition area. The track way is located on top of a plinth 15" above the roadway. It will rise up on piles with jersey barriers on either side. The columns are steel. Where the gap between the ground and the guideway is less than 4' high, it will be filled with concrete panels. The next ten bays will be screened and the rest will be open space. Public access will be restricted and that space may be used for storage. They don't want it to attract people but they don't want it to look awful either. The screen will be a steel fence in a 4x4 grid backed up with perforated metal panels (galvanized steel). It will allow a feel of openness without anyone being able to actually look in. The steel framework will be recessed back from the guideway, up to 13'.

The landscape plan proposed to Tukwila is the same as that for Seattle (both type of vegetation and layout). WSDoT requires that some trees be moved back (approximately 100 feet); they'd have to buy more property in order to move back from the curb instead.

The at-grade portions will have MSE walls with alternating striated and smooth 5' x 5' panels. The smooth will protrude about 1" from the striated, creating a "ribbon" effect. WSDoT requires a visual screen (chain link fence with brown slats) because the guideway will be the same height as the freeway and they are concerned about light and glare. The guideway's soil-nail walls will have fencing in front. Most are fairly low and the wall angles away as it moves up toward the MSE wall. WSDoT also would like vertical enhancements and caps where vegetation can be planted and hang below from the 144th Street bridge. Norie's working on an element to cast a shadow; all will occur above 10'. ST is hoping for one or two north of the bridge to lead to the bridge.

Discussion:

- I urge you to look for similar corridors where you come off of the freeway at grade and trees need to be removed. Make WSDoT define their request. Also urge STArt to look at options

for jersey barriers, screening, and the pattern on the MSE walls. *At MLK, the same surface is on the Hudson wall, so that is an option.*

North Link SEIS Review and Coordination

Lisa asked the Panel if they'd like to model their review after what the Planning Commission did with the Monorail EIS. Jack heard that the Planning Commission's review was the best review of any project, which is why Lisa thinks we should use the same model. She has the original letter to Sound Transit and the summary of who looked at what. She needs folks to sign up for individual portions of the EIS, review them during the rest of December, and send comments to her via e-mail. She will compile the comments into a single document. The January 2004 LRRP meetings will be working sessions with the Planning Commission, created by the PC but with input from all of LRRP. George, Mimi, and Matthew are already signed up for specific sections based on what they've reviewed previously (on Monorail). Lisa passed the list around to the other LRRP members so they could sign up. Barb Wilson has some copies of the SEIS on CD; the web site may also be useful. Jack will skim through the list and find where he will be most effective.

Lisa then handed out copies of the DSEIS review timeline. Alignment selection and criteria for that selection will go to Council after final comments are due January 30.

Additional items: Don may be stepping down from LRRP so other panelists may need to be involved in the replacement process. Lisa will need a major commitment from LRRP members in the next couple of months, then things will slow down considerably. Station markers (originally scheduled for January 6) has been rescheduled.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm.